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# Harmonization of conditions of service

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 61/244 that the Secretary-General submit a comprehensive report on harmonization of conditions of service in the field. The present report also addresses the observations of the International Civil Service Commission, as set out in its report entitled "Conditions of service in the field: staffing of field missions: review of the entitlements of internationally recruited staff in non-family duty stations".

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/1 (para. 162), the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the General Assembly reaffirmed the role of the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization, and requested him to make proposals to the Assembly on the conditions and measures necessary for him to carry out his managerial responsibilities effectively. The proposals of the Secretary-General were initially presented in his report entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1). The details of the proposed new human resources framework were elaborated in his report entitled "Investing in people" (A/61/255, and A/61/255/Add.1 and Corr.1) following extensive consultations held with managers, staff, including the Staff-Management Coordination Committee, and United Nations funds and programmes, and in the context of the inter-agency Human Resources Network.

2. One of the components of the new human resources framework is the Secretary-General's proposal to improve conditions of service in the field to meet the needs of an increasingly field-based Organization, through harmonization of the conditions of service of the Secretariat staff in the field with those of the United Nations funds and programmes.

3. The Secretary-General's proposals were reviewed by the General Assembly during its sixty-first session. Noting that the International Civil Service Commission had established a working group to review the conditions of service of international staff serving in non-family duty stations, the Assembly took note of the proposals of the Secretary-General, and requested that he submit a comprehensive report on the issue, including possible financial implications, at the second part of its resumed sixty-first session.[1]

4. Following the review of its working group, the International Civil Service Commission submitted recommendations for a harmonized approach within the United Nations system to the General Assembly.[2] The present report also addresses those recommendations.

# II. Background and rationale for change

5. In the past 60 years, the role of the United Nations has evolved to keep pace with global political, economic and social developments. While its operations have expanded, particularly in the field, the Organization has maintained traditional approaches to conditions of service that were developed at a time when the activities of the Organization were carried out mainly at Headquarters duty stations or established offices.

6. During the 1990s, the United Nations experienced an unprecedented demand for peacekeeping with the establishment of a number of large missions, which dramatically increased the number of staff in the field. At that time, the surge in peacekeeping was regarded as temporary. The compensation package for 300-series appointments of limited duration was geared towards non-career employment and was designed to minimize administration and permit the speedy recruitment of large

[1] Resolution 61/244, section VII, paragraph 5.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 30* (A/61/30).

numbers of staff. Newly established missions were routinely designated as "special", non-family missions in which mission subsistence allowance was paid in lieu of post adjustment, mobility and hardship allowance and assignment grant.

7. Over the years, a number of changes were gradually made to the 300-series appointments. In 1997, an occasional recuperation break was granted to internationally recruited civilian staff serving in special (non-family) missions to permit temporary relief for staff members from the highly stressful environment of a mission. Annual leave and maternity leave entitlements were enhanced and aligned with those applicable under the 100-series appointment. Later on, the service allowance was modified to include a family element, to allow the family members to become eligible for medical insurance coverage and for those staff to become eligible to participate in the United Nations group life insurance scheme.

8. The preceding changes, while intended to improve the conditions of service of staff serving in the field, have resulted in a proliferation of ad hoc solutions and inequitable treatment of staff. The arrangements have become cumbersome and difficult to administer, thus negatively impacting their intended purpose of administrative simplicity.

9. In addition, the conditions of service offered by the United Nations Secretariat to staff serving in the most difficult locations continue to be less favourable than those offered by the funds and programmes to their staff, who increasingly work side by side with Secretariat staff. In order to address this situation, the Secretary-General proposed in his report on investing in people (A/61/255) that the conditions of service of the Secretariat staff be harmonized with those of the funds and programmes.

10. The International Civil Service Commission, in the addendum to its report for the year 2006,[3] further recommended that the use of 300-series appointments be discontinued in non-family duty stations, as the compensation package is not aligned with the common system. In line with the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission, the Secretariat has revised its proposals relating to the harmonization of conditions of service in non-family duty stations to include the following:

(a) Introduce the special operations approach for all non-family duty stations that are in security phase III or higher;

(b) Replace the occasional recuperation break with rest and recuperation travel;

(c) Discontinue the use of 300-series appointments in non-family duty stations.

[3] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 30* (A/61/30/Add.1).

# III. Designation of family duty stations

11. The Secretary-General's report on investing in people (A/61/255) explained how, since the 1990s, new peace operations were routinely established as "special", non-family missions. As mentioned above, under the conditions of service of a "special" mission, staff receive payment of mission subsistence allowance in lieu of payment of post adjustment, assignment grant, shipment of personal effects, mobility and hardship allowance and rental subsidy. Family members are not permitted at the special mission, regardless of whether the security phase at the duty station would permit the presence of family members. In many instances, locations that were family duty stations for staff of the agencies, funds and programme were non-family duty stations for staff in United Nations peace operations. Furthermore, the compensation package for staff in United Nations peace operations was not in line with the common system and did not provide compensation for the maintenance of a separate residence for their dependants at a location outside the mission area.

12. The International Civil Service Commission, in its review of the entitlements of internationally recruited staff in non-family duty stations, recommended that the designation of United Nations peace operations as family or non-family should be brought into line with the designations applied throughout the United Nations common system. The Secretariat therefore will harmonize the designation of duty stations as family or non-family in accordance with the security phase decided by the Department of Safety and Security and the approach as applied by the Inter-Agency Committee on Field Duty Stations of the Human Resources Network of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board. As a result, the following 12 current special, non-family United Nations peace operations would be designated as family duty stations:

| *Mission* | *Security phase* | *Professional staff* | *FS, SS and GS[a] staff* | *Total[b]* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BONUCA | II | 13 | 14 | 27 |
| International Independent Inquiry Commission[c] | II | 36 | 53 | 89 |
| MINURSO | I | 20 | 83 | 103 |
| MONUC | II | 387 | 553 | 940 |
| UNMEE | II | 52 | 99 | 151 |
| UNMIN | II | 14 | 1 | 15 |
| UNMIS | II | 391 | 460 | 851 |
| UNMIT | II | 60 | 101 | 161 |
| UNOGBIS | II | 6 | 3 | 9 |
| UNOMIG | I | 28 | 71 | 99 |

| *Mission* | *Security phase* | *Professional staff* | *FS, SS and GS[a] staff* | *Total[b]* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UNPOS | I | 14 | 3 | 17 |
| UNTOP | I | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| **Total** | | **1 030** | **1 442** | **2 472** |

*Abbreviations*: FS=Field Service; SS=Security Service; GS=General Service.
Missions: BONUCA (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic), MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara), MONUC (United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), UNMEE (United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea), UNMIN (United Nations Mission in Nepal), UNMIS (United Nations Mission in the Sudan), UNMIT (United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste), UNOGBIS (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau), UNOMIG (United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia), UNPOS (United Nations Political Office for Somalia), UNTOP (United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding).

[a] International General Service staff.

[b] Staff incumbency levels as per the staffing table statistics as at 31 January 2007.

[c] For additional information concerning the Commission, see para. 13.

13. The Secretariat intends to change the designation of 11 of the 12 peace operations from special missions to family duty stations. The designation of the International Independent Inquiry Commission would remain unchanged: although its headquarters is located in Beirut, which is in security phase II, staff serving with the Commission are subject to special security arrangements, including mandatory accommodation at a secure hotel. Those security restrictions would not permit the presence of the family members of the Commission's staff at the duty station until such time as security conditions would permit a change in status. Payment of extended monthly evacuation allowance would be paid in respect of eligible family members in line with established security arrangements.

14. The mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region ended on 31 March 2007, with only a liquidation team remaining in place. Its designation would also remain unchanged, as it would neither be practical nor cost-effective to change the status of the mission at the present stage.

## IV. Special operations approach for non-family duty stations

15. Currently, under the special operations approach as applied by the funds and programmes, a location near a non-family duty station with adequate medical, educational and housing facilities is designated as an administrative place of assignment. With that approach, the staff member receives the same compensation and benefits as those normally given to internationally recruited Professional staff assigned to family duty stations.

16. The International Civil Service Commission recommended the discontinuation of the use of 300-series and of mission-specific 100-series appointments and the common system-wide harmonization of conditions of service by applying the special operations approach. Further, the Commission recommended that the special operations approach should use only the administrative place of assignment as the basis for entitlements given to staff serving in non-family duty stations.

17. At present, the following eight special, non-family missions in security phase III or higher would be considered non-family missions for which the special operations approach would apply:

| *Mission* | *Security phase* | *Administrative place of assignment* | *Professional staff* | *FS, SS and GS[a] staff* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BINUB | III | Nairobi | 83 | 137 | 220 |
| MINUSTAH | III | Santo Domingo | 186 | 245 | 431 |
| UNAMA | III | Islamabad | 125 | 90 | 215 |
| UNAMI | IV | Amman | 110 | 143 | 253 |
| UNIOSIL | III | Dakar | 35 | 38 | 73 |
| UNMIK | III | Belgrade | 260 | 234 | 494 |
| UNMIL | III | Dakar | 245 | 279 | 524 |
| UNOCI | III | Dakar | 153 | 218 | 371 |
| **Total** | | | **1 197** | **1 384** | **2 581** |

*Abbreviations*: FS=Field Service; SS=Security Service; GS=General Service.
Missions: BINUB (United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi), MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti), UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), UNAMI (United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq), UNIOSIL (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone), UNMIK (United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo), UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia), UNOCI (United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire).

[a] International General Service staff.

18. The special operations approach would be applied to all of the above missions, with the exception of UNMIK. The status of UNMIK will not be changed owing to uncertainty concerning the continued duration of the mandate at the present time.

## V. Harmonization of rest breaks

19. In his report on investing in people (A/61/255), the Secretary-General proposed that the occasional recuperation break scheme applied to United Nations field operations be replaced with the rest and recuperation travel scheme, employed by the funds and programmes. In accordance with the recommendation of the International Civil Service Commission, travel for rest breaks would be paid to a designated location. A daily subsistence allowance in connection with rest breaks would be payable only on an exceptional basis, when the Organization is unable to provide travel or make arrangements for staff members to travel to the approved rest and recuperation location.

20. The replacement of the occasional recuperation break scheme with rest and recuperation travel could be implemented for all eligible duty stations, with immediate effect from the date of approval by the General Assembly of the proposal by the Secretary-General and the decision of the International Civil Service Commission. Annex table 3 lists the duty stations for which the occasional recuperation break is authorized.

# VI. Timeline for implementation

21. The harmonization of conditions of service of staff in non-family missions would be implemented in two stages. In the first phase, missions in security phase II or lower would be designated as family duty stations, and rest and recuperation travel would introduced in all eligible duty stations. In the second phase, the special operations approach would be introduced in all non-family duty stations in security phase III or higher.

## A. Family duty stations

22. Initially, the missions listed in paragraph 12 would be designated as family duty stations. The appointments of staff serving at those duty stations would be changed from the 300 to 100 series, in compliance with the Organization's policies regarding the use of 300-series appointments and in line with the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission in the addendum to its report for the year 2006.[3]

23. The status of mission or status of forces agreement with the host country would be reviewed and would be amended, as appropriate, to allow for the presence of family members at the duty station. Conditions of service would also need to be revised for United Nations Volunteers currently serving in special missions that would become family duty stations. It is anticipated that the process of making the necessary legal and practical arrangements to change a special mission to a family duty station could be completed within six months.

## B. Non-family missions

### 1. Phase I

24. The replacement of the occasional recuperation break scheme with rest and recuperation travel could be implemented for all eligible duty stations, with immediate effect from the date of approval by the Assembly of the Secretary-General's proposal and the recommendation of the International Civil Service Commission.

### 2. Phase II

25. The preparations for the introduction of the special operations approach for the non-family duty stations indicated in paragraph 17 would commence immediately upon approval by the Assembly of the Secretary-General's proposals and the recommendation of the International Civil Service Commission. Such preparations would require the following actions:

(a) Designation of appropriate administrative places of assignment, in consultation with the Inter-Agency Committee on Field Duty Stations. Additional administrative places of assignment might need to be negotiated depending on the willingness of already designated places to absorb the additional numbers of dependants of staff serving in United Nations peace operations;

(b) Negotiation and agreement with the host Governments of the designated administrative places of assignment would be undertaken to permit the presence of

unaccompanied family members, including privileges and immunities relating to visas, taxation and the importation of personal effects;

(c) Mission security evacuation plans would need to be enhanced to provide for family members at the administrative places of assignment;

(d) Staff appointments on 300-series appointments would have to be reviewed and changed to 100-series contracts, in line with the proposals of the Secretary-General and the decision of the International Civil Service Commission to discontinue the use of 300-series appointments of limited duration in non-family duty stations contained in the addendum to its report for the year 2006.[3]

26. The anticipated timeline for implementation of the second phase is nine months from the date of approval by the Assembly of the Secretary-General's proposal and the decision of the International Civil Service Commission.

## VII. Financial implications

27. The financial implications reflected in the Secretary-General's report on investing in people (A/61/255) for the harmonization of family and non-family duty stations in line with the security phase and the approach applied by the Inter-Agency Committee on Field Duty Stations and the introduction of the special operations approach in non-family duty stations have been updated to reflect the updated numbers of affected staff and current rates of salaries and allowances (see annex tables 1 and 2).

28. The requirements for peacekeeping operations for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, in total, are estimated at $72.5 million and are comprised of $45.2 million for the conversion of staff contracts and the change in mission status from non-family to family; $10.5 million for replacing the current occasional recuperation break with rest and recuperation travel; and $16.8 million relating to the costs of introducing the special operations approach at non-family duty stations.

29. Based on the assumptions used in estimating the requirements included in the present report, the resource implications for the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 arising from the replacement of the current occasional recuperation break scheme with rest and recuperation travel, to be implemented from July 2007, would amount to $1.5 million.

30. The indicative resource requirements for the biennium 2008-2009 are estimated at $98.4 million and relate to (a) the replacement of the current occasional recuperation break scheme with rest and recuperation travel to be implemented from July 2007 ($6.2 million); (b) the conversion of staff contracts and change of special missions from non-family to family status to be implemented from January 2008 ($21.2 million); and (c) the introduction of the special operations approach to be implemented from April 2008 ($71.0 million). The actual amounts of resource requirements for the biennium 2008-2009 will be different if the actual parameters at that time vary from the assumptions made in arriving at the above estimates. In addition, an amount estimated at $793,000 per annum for staff funded under extrabudgetary resources would be required, which comprises $701,000 for the introduction of the special operations approach and $92,000 for the rest and recuperation travel.

31. Non-family missions average a 29 per cent vacancy rate and 26 per cent turnover of Professional staff, with the attendant negative impact on mission mandate delivery. As indicated in the addendum to the report of the International Civil Service Commission for the year 2006,[3] the experience of other field-based organizations of the common system demonstrates the positive impact of the application of harmonized conditions of service. Whereas the vacancy and turnover rates in United Nations peace operations currently fluctuate between 25 and 30 per cent, field-based organizations of the United Nations system report that their similarly high vacancy rates prior to the introduction of the preceding measures have now dropped to an overall "miniscule high of 8 per cent".

# VIII. Conclusion and recommendations

32. If the United Nations is to become an employer of choice in today's highly competitive global market and maintain a workforce capable of meeting the challenges of increasingly complex work in the field, it needs to offer conditions of service that will attract and retain high-quality personnel. At present, the conditions of service offered by the Secretariat are not conducive to that vision, thus preventing the Organization from effectively managing its human resources.

33. As indicated in the addendum to the International Civil Service Commission's report for the year 2006,[3] the experience of other field-based organizations of the common system demonstrates the positive impact of the application of harmonized conditions of service.

34. Importantly, the International Civil Service Commission agreed in the addendum to its report for the year 2006 that the harmonization of conditions of service at non-family duty stations was essential for the preservation of the United Nations common system.

35. **The General Assembly is requested:**

(a) **To approve the proposed framework and changes in conditions of service presented in this report;**

(b) **Under peacekeeping operations:**

(i) **To note that an estimated amount of $45.2 million is required for the conversion of staff contractual status and missions from non-family to family status, to be implemented from 1 January 2008, under the 2007/08 budgets of the relevant peacekeeping operations;**

(ii) **To note that an estimated amount of $10.5 million would be required for replacing the current occasional recuperation break with rest and recuperation travel, at the relevant peacekeeping operations for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, with a proposed implementation of 1 July 2007 and would be absorbed within approved budget levels of individual peacekeeping operations and the expenditures thereon reported in the respective mission performance reports for the financial period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008;**

(iii) **To note that an estimated amount of $16.8 million would be required for the introduction of the special operations approach at non-family duty stations, to be implemented from 1 April 2008, under the relevant budgets**

**of the individual peacekeeping operations for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 and would be absorbed within approved budget levels of individual peacekeeping operations and the expenditures thereon reported in the respective mission performance reports for the financial period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008;**

**(c) Under the programme budget:**

**(i) To note that an estimated amount of $1.5 million would be required under the provision for special political missions under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, for the replacement of the current occasional recuperation break scheme with rest and recuperation travel, to be implemented from 1 July 2007, and that actual expenditures in that regard would be reported in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007;**

**(ii) To note that for the biennium 2008-2009 the resource requirements, estimated at $98.4 million, relate to the following:**

**a. the conversion of staff contracts and the change of special missions from non-family to family status ($21.2 million);**

**b. the replacement of the current occasional recuperation break scheme with rest and recuperation travel ($6.2 million);**

**c. the introduction of the special operations approach at non-family duty stations ($71.0 million);**

**(iii) To note also that any variance between the current assumptions and those prevailing at the time of submission of the budget proposals for special political missions for 2008 and 2009 would be included in those proposals and drawn to the attention of the General Assembly.**

# Annex

Table 1
**Estimated annual financial implications for the designation of special missions as family duty stations**

(United States dollars)

| *Mission* | *Reappointment from 300 to 100 series* | *Family duty station entitlements* | *Rest and recuperation travel* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BONUCA | 103 514 | 862 288 | 40 500 | 1 006 302 |
| International Independent Inquiry Commission | 368 330 | 685 202 | 267 000 | 1 320 532 |
| MINURSO | 193 906 | 2 369 197 | 206 000 | 2 769 103 |
| MONUC | 3 718 353 | 27 600 230 | 2 820 000 | 34 138 583 |
| UNMEE | 462 962 | 3 811 752 | 302 000 | 4 576 714 |
| UNMIN | 1 622 103 | 5 907 649 | 0 | 7 529 752 |
| UNMIS | 4 497 760 | 36 898 691 | 1 276 500 | 42 672 951 |
| UNMIT | 881 989 | 4 713 867 | 322 000 | 5 917 856 |
| UNOGBIS | 28 364 | 330 023 | 18 000 | 376 387 |
| UNOMIG | 343 676 | 4 907 796 | 148 500 | 5 399 972 |
| UNPOS | 63 819 | 192 581 | 0 | 256 400 |
| UNTOP | 42 546 | 381 638 | 15 000 | 439 184 |
| **Total per annum** | **12 327 322** | **88 660 914** | **5 415 500** | **106 403 736** |

Table 2
**Estimated annual financial implications for the introduction of the special operations approach in United Nations peace operations**

(United States dollars)

| *Mission* | *Reappointment from 300 to 100 series* | *Special operations approach entitlements* | *Rest and recuperation travel* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| BINUB | 1 064 893 | 10 228 004 | 660 000 | 11 952 897 |
| MINUSTAH | 1 981 478 | 16 883 182 | 1 293 000 | 20 157 660 |
| UNAMA | 1 080 208 | 11 318 239 | 860 000 | 13 258 447 |
| UNAMI | 1 257 940 | 11 755 089 | 1 012 000 | 14 025 029 |
| UNIOSIL | 287 679 | 3 575 458 | 219 000 | 4 082 137 |
| UNMIK | 1 569 615 | [a] | 1 482 000 | 3 051 615 |
| UNMIL | 2 296 461 | 25 602 364 | 1 572 000 | 29 470 825 |
| UNOCI | 1 656 754 | 17 377 714 | 1 113 000 | 20 147 468 |
| **Total per annum** | **11 195 028** | **96 740 050** | **8 211 000** | **116 146 078** |

[a] See para. 18.

Table 3
**Rest and recuperation cycles for United Nations peace operations**

| *Mission* | *Rest and recuperation cycle (as of 1 January 2007)* |
|---|---|
| BINUB | 8 weeks |
| BONUCA | 12 weeks for Bangui; 8 weeks for the rest of the country |
| International Independent Inquiry Commission | 8 weeks |
| MINURSO | 12 weeks for Western Sahara; 8 weeks for Tindouf |
| MINUSTAH | 8 weeks |
| MONUC | 8 weeks |
| UNAMA | 6 weeks |
| UNAMI | 4 weeks |
| UNIOSIL | 8 weeks |
| UNMEE | 8 weeks for Eritrea and border areas with Ethiopia |
| UNMIK | 8 weeks |
| UNMIL | 8 weeks for Monrovia, 6 weeks for the rest of the country |
| UNMIN | 8 weeks for Biratnagar, Jhapa and Nepalgunji only |

| *Mission* | *Rest and recuperation cycle (as of 1 January 2007)* |
|---|---|
| UNMIS | 8 weeks for Khartoum, 6 weeks for the rest of the Sudan |
| UNMIT | 8 weeks |
| UNOCI | 8 weeks |
| UNOGBIS | 12 weeks for Bissau |
| UNOMIG | 12 weeks for Tbilisi, 8 weeks for Gali, Sukhumi and Zugdidi |
| UNPOS | — |
| UNTOP | 12 weeks |